Killing Armor

In the Middle Ground

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The U.S. Army Infantry fights the antiarmor battle at three ranges. Short range targets are handled by light antiarmor weapons (LAWs) such as the AT-4; the middle ground is handled by medium antiarmor weapons (MAWs) such as the Dragon; and long range targets are engaged by heavy antiarmor weapons (HAWs), primarily TOWs.

The ongoing debate over antiarmor weapon development, training, and doctrine has rekindled many issues from the past, not the least of which is how light infantry units can best fight armor in the middle ground with MAWs. (For purposes of this article the middle ground is the 200-700 meter range of the battlefield.)

Before discussing how light infantrymen can best fight armor in the middle ground, some general assumptions are warranted to set the terms of reference for my argument.

- The Army's future MAW, the advanced antiarmor weapon system—medium (AAWS-M), is at least 10 years away. Proposals for the future AAWS-M require that it be no heavier than 45 pounds and manportable.
- In the same 10 years the defense dollar will continue to shrink, making the value of expensive antiarmor systems for *all* infantry forces and *all* theaters questionable.
- Our light infantry's most probable armored threat in the next several decades will be in the lesser developed countries, in cities as well as rural battlefields. Therefore, most probable armored targets for our light infantrymen will be on the lower end of the "high tech" threat scale. Most will be non-tank type armor *without* reactive armor.
- During that time, our light infantrymen will still want manportable antiarmor weapons with little or no reliance on vehicles to sustain their loads. Their primary focus will remain on the premise that if you don't carry your killing tools on yourself you're *not truly* light.
- Regardless of theater or type of mission, light infantry will still want the capability (regardless of whether it takes three weapons or one) to kill armor, bust defense works (rural or city), and kill soldiers with an antipersonnel round.
- The terminal training objective for MAW crews will continue to be to kill armor and to kill enemy soldiers with a minimum loss of its own crews. To ensure that the terminal training objective can be met, the infantry will continue to train to defeat armor from the flanks and rear, avoiding the frontal armor shot. In general, any MAW can defeat any armor from the flank or rear.

If these assumptions are generally true, what tools does the light infantryman have with which to accomplish the terminal training objective? The current primary tool for the middle ground is the Dragon. The 75th Ranger Regiment, the Berlin Brigade, and many Engineer, Cavalry, and security units retain the M67 90mm recoilless rifle. (Most of these units retain the M67 by default, not by choice.) For fighting the middle ground in the future, the Dragon is not the preferred MAW for light infantry units since it lacks versatility for busting defense works, is least useful in cities, requires prolonged gunner exposure and is too delicate. The Dragon also requires a "designated" gunner training methodology that is materially different from the primary purpose for which the Army purchased the weapon. While we initially believed any soldier could hit a tank at 1,000 meters, subsequent years of experience proved this wasn't possible.

The fundamental issue for killing armor and enemy soldiers with a MAW is how much we can get out of such a weapon. Consistently, U.S. and foreign technologies have settled on the 80mm to 100mm bore for MAWs. The trade-off for warhead size is range versus weight. Bigger warheads can't go as far as small projectiles on the same amount of propellant. Neither can one man carry a large MAW in addition to his own basic load. It generally takes two or three men to carry a MAW weighing 45 to 60 pounds. In the research and development community, all contractor proposals for future dual-purpose light to medium antiarmor and anti-bunker weapons use a recoilless technology, and round diameters remain in the vicinity of 84mm to 115mm. Laws of physics and acceptable soldier load limits consistently keep medium systems within this "caliber."

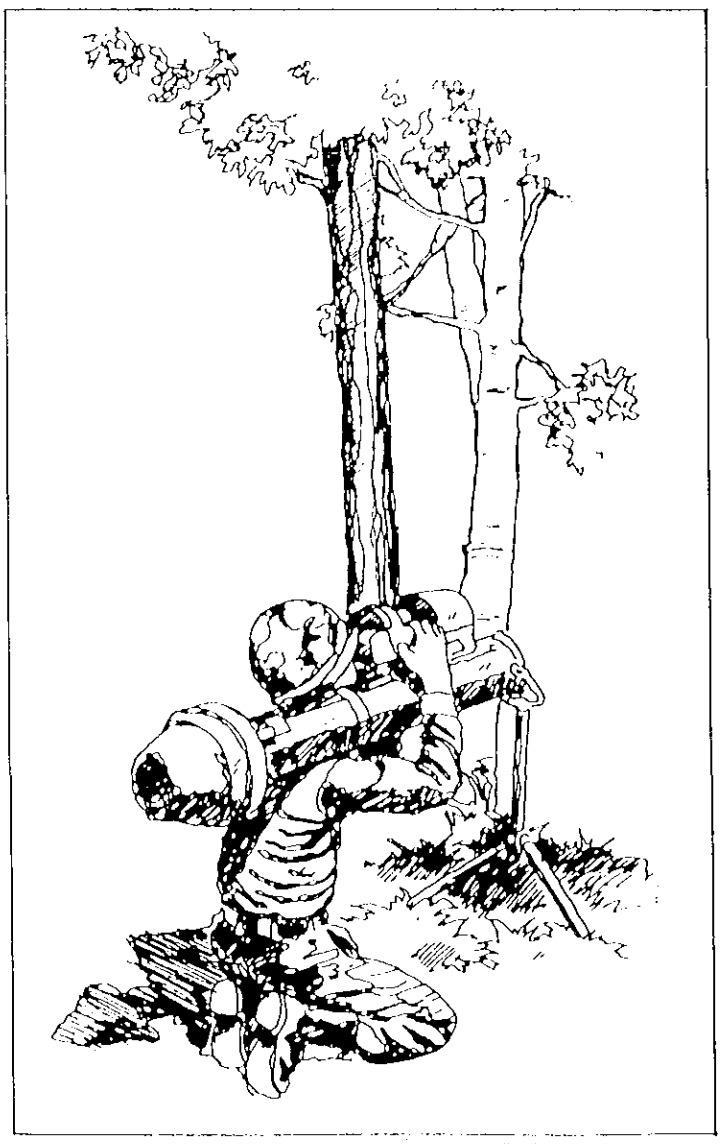
Until there is a remarkable technological breakthrough that drastically alters the laws of science, therefore, a medium antiarmor weapon of an aver-

age 95mm bore that relies on technology (instead of a gunner) to get a hit on distant armor cannot satisfy the terminal training objective with only one soldier. The ability of an infantryman to handle a 45-pound weapon expertly – alone---and consistently achieve target hits cannot be sustained in training today or in the next several decades.

Exceptional marksmen (of any kind) are so because they shoot a lot. We cannot rely on simulators and video apparatus to provide the same quality of trained marksmen and crews that live firing provides. Exceptional marksmen become exceptional only when resources keep up with their requirements. MAWs that are too expensive to shoot frequently and that require expensive simulators and training devices are in the long term more expensive than a simple, rugged, reliable MAW with inexpensive ammunition, of which a lot can be provided.

A review of how the Army fights short range armor targets would be beneficial, in order to put the MAW issue in proper context.

The Army, in developing a set of common tasks in which soldiers should be proficient, included the task of engaging armor. Light antiarmor weapons (LAWs) are the correct choice for this because common task individual soldier targets are expected to be at short range. The common task soldier (not including infantrymen, tankers, TOW gunners, and attack helicopter gunners) is not expected to be an integral part of antiarmor fire planning. Rather, the common task soldier will engage armor more in local self-defense than as an offensive initiative. LAWs are inexpensive and easy to train on. Short range antiarmor fires (normally far less than 200 meters), especially in the rear battle area, can be relatively efficient when delivered by simple, light, antiarmor weapons.



Engaging armor targets at ranges from 200 to 700 meters, however, requires more proficiency than a common task soldier can be expected to have.

We must accept the fact that one man, infrequently trained, cannot do as well as dedicated crewmen who haul the several components and fight the weapon as a team. We don't treat our machineguns, tanks, or helicopters that way. (The addition of an antiarmor section to the light infantry company would be an excellent way to fix this problem.)

Accordingly, MAW killing tasks need to be undertaken either by a system that relies on the weapon for success and that depends less on the gunner and crew, or by one that relies on the gunner and crew for success and depends less on the technology of the weapon. I propose that the best way to fight targets in the 200-to-700-meter range band is the latter.

Which weapon best fits the fighting philosophy outlined above? The "best" MAW should be versatile enough to meet the needs of light infantrymen in the three desired capabilities. If an inexpensive, rugged, low training cost solution is available to meet those needs, encumbering the light force with two or three different weapons to achieve multiple round (rocket or missile) MAW capability is an expensive and tactically unsound venture. Multisystem solutions cost too much and require the same "designated" gunner approach as the Dragon to retain any proficiency with no appreciable gain in its ability to kill armor. Shrinking resources demand a critical look at simple, inexpensive answers to a simple problem. A crew-served MAW with multiple round, rocket or missile choice, and abundant service and subcaliber ammunition is a reasonable solution.

One solution would be to improve

our own M67 recoilless rifle. The technology exists for making a 25-pound rifle out of titanium, for improving the breech-locking mechanisms, and for lightening the monopod and other components. With the commitment of funds for research and development, state-of-the-art ammunition to fill the three desired capabilities is within easy reach. That ammunition would be substantively better than any that is available through any foreign market. This solution, in the broad sense, is infinitely more affordable than any of the high-technology solutions that have been offered.

The Army must take a critical look at how we fight the middle ground. We must return to a fighting philosophy that a medium antiarmor weapon must be simple, durable, and inexpensive; must be crew-served; and must have an abundant supply of ammunition in order to kill armor with exceptional marksmen shooting exceptionally accurate fires.

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Officer Evaluation

How Well Does the System Work?

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General John A Wickham, when he was Chief of Staff of the Army, said, "Our effectiveness depends on continuing to improve the professional competence, imagination, and integrity of Army leaders from the most senior to the most junior."

To help promote that improvement, the Army uses the Officer Evaluation System as its primary tool for identifying the officers who are best qualified for advancement and assignment to positions of increased responsibility. But does this system actually work? And does it contribute to the improvement of professional competence within the officer corps? The results of a recent survey I conducted indicate that the system may be out of kilter.

I administered my survey over a period of time to company grade officers with approximately four years of commissioned service who were attending Infantry Officers Advanced Course classes at the Infantry School. Each of these officers was asked to complete the survey on the basis of his last job assignment before coming to the course, and 108 responded.

Admittedly, this is a limited study with data from a small group; nevertheless, the results may be an indication of a more general problem with the system.

One rather sobering result from the data was an apparent lack of communication between the rated officer and his raters. DA Pamphlet 623-105 clearly states that the officer evaluation support form (DA Form 67-8-1) "should be first used during the rating period as a work sheet to discuss the rated officer's duty description and major performance objectives." Despite this guidance, 37 percent of the officers in the survey said they had not agreed with their raters in advance on what their performance objectives would be. Fifty-nine percent of them said they had not even discussed their performance objectives with their *senior* raters.

Equally disturbing is the fact that 40 percent of the officers said they were unaware of the standards of performance and the expectations of their raters, and 68 percent said they did not discuss standards or expectations with their senior raters.

Fifty-four percent of the officers indicated they had received performance counseling from their raters throughout the rating period, but only 27 percent indicated that their senior raters had provided any performance counseling during the rating period.

Seventy-two percent said they discussed their performance with their raters at the end of the rating period, while 28 percent said they did not. Only 49 percent said they discussed their performance with their senior raters at the end.

Sixty-two percent said they did not believe the efficiency report would affect their future performance while 38 percent felt their performance would improve as a result of the report.

All of these responses indicate that, in the eyes of these officers at least, the officer evaluation system is not working very well.

One of the problems seems to be the way the support form is being neglected. According to DA Pamphlet 623-105, this form is designed to "increase planning and relate performance to mission through joint understanding between the rater and rated officer and [to] encourage performance